PRISON LABOR.

AN ARGUMENT

MADE BEFORE THE

ASSEMBLY AND SENATE COMMITTEES

OF THE

LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

ON PRISONS,

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ARGUMENT.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Assembly Prison Committee:

One year ago I had the honor of presenting to the committees of the two Houses of the Legislature some considerations in regard to the subject of prison labor.

I stated that in 1880, the Legislatures of Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Jersey, each appointed a special commission, in all seventeen gentlemen of the highest character and ability, "to make careful inquiry into the subject of prison labor, and whether it comes into competition with free labor; and if so, in what manner, and to what extent, and what in their opinion is the best means of preventing such competition, and at the same time providing maintenance for the prisoners."

Several months were spent in taking testimony, which is very voluminous, and every opportunity was offered for any one, having a real or an imaginary grievance, to present it.

The Connecticut Commissioners say (page 9):

"As the Legislature in providing for the appointment of

this Commission did not give them power of summoning witnesses, it was decided to issue a series of questions to manufacturers and artisans throughout the State, asking for such information as would materially assist the Commission in forming a just estimate of the extent of the injury complained of. These circulars were prepared and sent by mail, to the number of more than 2,000. But few replies were received, and those which were, came from parties who must have been entirely uninformed upon the subject of prison labor, and who could never by any possibility have been injured by it. These replies were absolutely worthless as furnishing information."

"Disappointed at not receiving more information, or even complaint, either from the signers of the petition, or from others in reply to our circulars, and remembering that the petitioners say that grievous evil is worked to us and our business, and being anxious, if possible, to rightly answer the question, does convict labor interfere with the free labor of the State, the Commissioners gave notice of a public meeting to be held in Hartford on the 5th day of November."

"The meeting was extensively advertised, but not a person appeared before them to represent either corporation, manufacturer or individual. No citizen appeared in person or by proxy, thus indicating that the grievous evils had no existence."

And gentlemen, they had no existence then in Connecticut, and they have none now, either in that State or in the State of New York. It is true that production increases

the supply, whether made by convicts or by citizens, but the increase by the former is of slight importance in comparison with that by the latter.

Half a dozen new manufactories, and they are almost daily increasing in most branches, have more influence upon the various trades and the workmen, than all the production in our prisons and penitentiaries.

The introduction of one important piece of improved machinery into some of the industries affects the citizen mechanics more directly than all the convict workers in such industries, and no one thinks of asking the government to regulate the use of machinery.

It must be remembered that in most industries, convict mechanics produce but about one-half of the amount produced by citizens; and I will here quote from an excellent authority on this subject.

Col. Carroll D. Wright, Chief of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor. In his report to the Legislature in 1879 on this subject, he says:

"Parties who write and speak upon convict labor are apt to take it for granted that the product per man is the same for the prisoner as for the outside worker. In this they err; the product of each person employed in the manufacture of boots and shoes in Massachusetts is $1,858 per year; that is, 48,090 operatives, employed in 1875, produced $89,375,792 worth of goods. The product of prison work per man is $1,142 per year. The two hundred workmen employed on boots and shoes at Concord produce $228,575 worth of goods per year on an

average. The same number outside would make $371,600 worth of goods."

I have proved, without contradiction before this committee, that the production of stoves in Perry & Co.'s Sing Sing foundries is but little over one-half per man what it is in their Albany foundry.

One of the conclusions announced by the inter-State committees was in these words :

" That as a rule convicts do not accomplish more than one-half as much as freemen."

The advent of French Canadians into New England and Northern New York within a few years past in thirty-two towns, in 1881 had reached in number 88,652 in a population of 417,877. They are an industrious and money-saving people, and willing to work at low wages. This has had a powerful influence, and it has excited the opposition of those who were there before, and particularly of the trades unions, who find it difficult to bring these Canadians under their despotic sway. In contrast with this ever-increasing horde, the labor of a few hundred convicts is scarcely worthy of a moment's consideration.

In the paper before referred to, I briefly considered the questions of idleness for the prisoners, of unproductive labor, of unskilled labor, and of the lessee system.

It is pretty certain that few persons could be found in this enlightened age to advocate the adoption of either of these systems.

That class of our citizens which is engaged in common or unskilled labor is least able to meet the competition

from convicts, while there is no class of men more independent than our skilled mechanics.

I also referred in that paper to the "Public Account" system, that is, when the State itself becomes the manufacturer, and enters into competition with its own citizens in the sale of goods. I showed that during more than thirty years of experimenting at Clinton Prison in the manufacture of iron and nails, that the State had sunk millions, and that nothing but loss to the State had resulted from conducting the various industries of burning lime, working marble, laundrying shirts, manufacturing mill-stones, tools and brushes.

Notwithstanding that in all these different industries the State has been the loser, there are some in this day who think they find in the public account system a panacea for all the so-called ills resulting from convict labor. So long as the mechanical trades are not affected, little sympathy is felt for the poor lime-burners on the mountains, or the miners and iron-workers whose interests are quite as sacred as those of moulders, hatters or shoemakers.

The public account system was adopted in the Elmira Reformatory with a great flourish of trumpets, but we all know how disastrously it ended, and with what alacrity the Legislature ordered a change to the contract system.

In a financial view, it would no doubt be more profitable to keep the prisoners in idleness, than for the State to attempt to conduct any manufacturing industry.

The public account system has been tested in the prisons of Maine, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Virginia and

many others, and in nearly every case abandoned. There is one exception; the County penitentiary at East Cambridge, Massachusetts. In regard to this institution, Col. Wright says in his report to the Massachusetts Legislature (1879, page 17):

"At Cambridge 180 men are employed upon brushes. The raw material is purchased, made up and sold on account of the institution. The brush-makers enter no complaint against the prison contract, but their principal complaint is of the injurious competition of the county of Middlesex."

Here, they allege, is a large corporation with unlimited means, paying neither rent nor taxes, and not even obliged to make a profit, and they find it impossible to compete with it.

The New Jersey Commissioners say (page 21):

"If the trades complain now of the competition of contractors who are of themselves subject to the same circumstances financially and commercially as other manufacturers, what would be their complaint against the gigantic power of the State? The immense soulless corporation, with resources beyond those of any individual with power to hold enormous quantities of goods, and throw them upon the market at pleasure, without risk to the manager, with all the credit of a great commonwealth as a basis of operation, entering into competition with its citizens."

On this point Col. Wright says (page 22):

"Wherever the public account system has prevailed, it has

caused more slaughtering of prices than any other, yet the parties who demand it find no fault. They can see the most unjust results from contracting for the *labor* of convicts, but can see no harm in contracting for the *products* of the same labor."

It is urged by some theorists that under the public account system the government would receive the profits that now are supposed to go into the pockets of the contractors. These people do not realize that a well-organized business with a line of customers to take the products is not called into existence to order, but only after years of patient effort, and that few who start in the race achieve success.

The Connecticut Commissioners on this subject well say (page 34) :

" A successful manufacturing business is of slow growth, the result of business ability and well-matured plans carried on with great perseverance through years of trial to ultimate success."

Again, it is claimed that under the public account system the prisoners would be more removed from the influence of citizen instructors and overseers than under the contract system. How can this be ? The business would not run itself ; it would require even a larger number of instructors and overseers ; certainly they would be appointed if the prison was run under political influence ; and it may be assumed they would be of no better character than those now employed, and that they would be less careful and attentive in conducting the business of the State, than if under the eye of a contractor whose fi-

nancial success or ruin depended on a thorough and economical management.

I have been engaged in the business of devising, constructing and manufacturing stoves for forty years and ought to have some skill and knowledge on the subject. Yet I am conscious of ignorance and short-sightedness every day of my life. I am constantly making mistakes, and shall probably continue to do so to the end.

The prisons in California previous to 1882 were run under the *contract system.* In response to public clamor a law was passed requiring the labor to be charged to the *public account system.*

The State Board of Prison Directors in their report to the Legislature, December, 1881, say:

"The contractors now employing convict labor at San Quentin are all preparing to close the existing arrangements on or before January 1, 1882."

The people of California have had an experience of one year with the *public account system,* and the results are depicted in vivid colors in the San Francisco *News Letter,* as found copied in the New York *Star* of 5th inst., the latter assuming that the *contract system* was yet in operation in that State.

The San Francisco *News Letter* says:

"San Quentin prison is a vast charnel-house of wrong-doing, yet, although a joint legislative committee has evidence of the fact, and although a Legislature is in session which is abundantly competent to effectively deal with the rascalities of that institution, nothing whatever will be accomplished. To outsiders this may appear inexplicable. It would seem to follow that a known and proven wrong should be remedied. If it is not, if legislators hesitate to do their duty, if committees fail to report and ignore bills of a reformatory character, what is the

conclusion? At Sacramento the fact is only too palpable that there are occult influences at work. The atmosphere is charged with rumors of corrupt practices. That a "sack" has been introduced, and that corrupt influences are at work, is only too certain. There are some signs as certain as Holy Writ. When men do things which they would not do except for money, there can be no reasonable doubt of what is in the background. A month ago, a bill was introduced providing that all articles bought and sold from San Quentin should be competed for by public bids duly advertised and made known. On its face, it was a just and righteous measure. Its effect was to break up a ring that is making at least a cool hundred thousand dollars a year at the expense of the State. Yet, to this hour, it has not been reported back, and the member in charge of it has importuned members of the Assembly State Prison Committee in vain. The present management of San Quentin is Republican, and is in the hands of a ring that will contribute thousands of dollars to the next Republican campaign, and yet Democratic legislators cannot be got to put an end to a state of affairs that threatens evil to their party. Why? Because a corruption fund that comes home to certain members is dearer to them than party or State interests. That is the plain truth, as we have ascertained it to be."

"The fact is that the money-making capacity of San Quentin is at present a big thing. Nothing like it has been witnessed in California. San Quentin is the largest manufactory in the State. It has some 1,200 men constantly employed. They manufacture furniture, doors, sashes, tubs, buckets, blinds, jute, bricks and numerous other articles. So large a business ought to be conducted in a manner open and above board. But it is not. The warden buys the raw material from whomsoever he likes, and sells to whom he pleases, and declines to allow an inspection of his books. The prison funds are kept in a bank account in his private name; there is no audit and no check whatever. It would be surprising indeed, if so loose a system did not engender corruption. It does. A ring manages the whole system, and thousands of dollars are being made by somebody. At the same time free labor is being competed with, and enterprising private firms are having their business interfered with and crippled by the sale of prison-manufactured articles at much less than their value, and are far less than they would bring if offered for sale at public competition. This is an intolerable condition of things that ought not to be permitted to continue one unnecessary hour, and would not be if the ring were not distributing a corruption fund at Sacramento. This is a sad and lamentable fact, but it is a fact, nevertheless. If thieves

may not only gain immunity, but a continued license to steal by distributing a modicum of their plunder among legislators, where is rascality to end?

Such is the report of the workings of the San Quentin State prison in California after one short year of trial under the *public account system.* Such has been substantially the history of most other prisons where this system has prevailed, and such, it may be predicted, will be the future history of those that are led into this delusion.

In commenting upon this disgraceful management of the San Quentin prison, the New York *Star*, in its simplicity, charges it to the *contract system*, a system in which the officers of prisons have no opportunity for speculation. During the six years that the State prisons of New York have been run under this system, not a dollar has been lost. The monthly payments made by the contractors must be in the hands of the Comptroller by a certain date; if they are not, his vigilant Deputy must know the reason why. So far as I know or have heard, not one dishonest act has been even charged against any of our State prison officers during the past six years.

The *Star* says:

SING SING IN CALIFORNIA.

What the *Star* has said in condemnation of the convict contract system is true not only of New York State, but of every State in which that malefic system finds lodgment. The exposure in our columns of the abuses nurtured at Sing Sing, Clinton and Auburn has led to official investigations in several other States — among the rest, in California, and some of the effects of the system at San Quentin, extending as they do to the legislative chambers at Sacramento, are graphically painted in the subjoined extracts from the San Francisco *News Letter:* "Sack"

is the equivalent, on the Pacific Coast, of the suggestive though inelegant terms "bar'l" and "boodle" in localities further East. Now, observe that the *News Letter* is an independent journal with a strongly Republican bias. No newspaper beyond the Rocky Mountains is more bitter in its denunciations of Sand Lotism and of every thing that smacks of demagoguery. Yet it is intelligent enough to perceive, and honest enough to denounce the flagrant evils which are inseparable from convict contracts.

"San Quentin prison is the largest manufactory in the State." What a volume of suggestiveness is embraced in that brief sentence! Of course, the favored capitalists who hire the labor of the prisoners at fifty cents per head per day reap enormous profits from the investment, and of course, also, there are plenty of legislators and lobbyists ready to perpetuate the system for a consideration. The charges formulated in the *News Letter* are direct and positive, apart from its logical argument, that "when men do things which they would not do except for money, there can be no reasonable doubt of what is in the background." Here in New York we are more fortunate, possessing this year a Legislature which promises to uproot the scandalous and oppressive outgrowth of Mr. Pilsbury's invention. Doubtless when our State shall have set the good example, similar reforms will be forced in California and elsewhere.

Change the words in the above, "*convict contract system*" for "*public account system*," and the comments will most truthfully apply to the condition of things in the San Quentin prison.

The contract system is that, toward which the opposition of the workingmen of the State appears to be mainly directed. The inquiry is then pertinent, is this opposition well founded?

(Then follow some statistics in regard to the number of convicts engaged in manufacturing industries which in substance appear on pages 48 to 54 of former paper.)

The labor reformer wants the contract system abolished, because it increases competition in trade. Every new manufactory that is established somewhat increases such

competition, but no more under a prison contract than any other, and the establishment of a new manufactory is not generally considered a calamity.

So far as relates to stoves we sell them no cheaper than those made wholly by citizens; our price lists are prepared irrespective of where the goods are made. This has been clearly proved by Mr. Hobbs of Albany, who arranges the prices under the advice of the firm; by Mr. Hughes, the resident partner in Chicago, who sells about half the product, and by Mr. Barnes, of the manufacturing firm of J. Van Wormer & Co. of Albany. Even Mr. Smizer, of Louisville, Ky., called by the complainant, was ready to admit that Perry & Co. had striven to keep up prices.

He testified on cross-examination as follows: Q. "Do you know of any house in the trade that has made more strenuous efforts for ten years to keep up prices than Perry & Co., or individually, than John S. Perry? A. No, sir, there is no man who has worked in that direction more zealously and with better effect than John S. Perry."

As to an overstock of stoves at present on the market Mr. Smizer testifies as follows: Q. "Is it not probably due to the large increase of stove foundries in the west that there is now an overstock of stoves in the country? A. I think it is purely that, Mr. Perry; we are making more stoves than the people want; foundries are idle all over the country, Cincinnati is idle and so is St. Louis. Too many stoves and nobody to buy them."

This testimony from the complainant's witness effectually answers the complaint made by moulders, that the overstock is due to prison labor.

There are more stoves produced in the city of Detroit alone in foundries that have lately come into existence, than in all the prisons in the land.

In regard to the abundance of work for stove moulders and stove mounters, Mr. Smizer testified as follows: Q. "Do you know of any respectable and skilled stove moulders or mounters who have been unable to obtain work at good wages during the past two or three years? A. No, not for the last two or three years. O, well, they are a migratory set, you know, and they travel around considerably."

The testimony is clear that foundrymen have had full employment. Nearly every moulder in the city of Albany worked until the last day of the year. It is true that some of the moulders from Troy testified that work fell off after the middle of October. The manufacturers were disappointed in the amount of their sales during the last quarter of the year, and doubtless some shops reduced their work, but the causes were several, of which convict labor was the least.

The testimony is complete that the wages of moulders have advanced during the past five years some forty-five or fifty per cent.

The only testimony to the contrary was given by Mr. Smizer.

He says, "I don't think the cost of moulding has increased any over 1877."

Further on he says, his moulders struck in 1880 and 1881, and that he overcame it by "freezing them out"—"by going on the streets and hiring men and boys

and putting them in and making workmen of them, until these men (the moulders) from their necessities were compelled to go to work."

Is it not fair to infer that the imperfect work made by these green men and boys from the street, is the reason why Perry & Co. crowded him out of Charleston and Savannah as he testifies. It was not *price* but *quality* that commanded the trade for Perry & Co. in those cities. In regard to competition in prices Mr. Smizer testified: "Zanesville, Ohio, is the worst place I ever struck in my life. The Noble concern sells awful cheap, there is no doubt about that. We don't have much worse competition than Noble & Co. Well, I tell you Evansville and other places on the Ohio river are bad pills."

In regard to the charge that Perry & Co. undersell the market, and that manufacturers employing citizen labor cannot compete with them, it is utterly destitute of proof. If the manufacturers of our country are suffering from this cause, why have they not come before this honorable committee and stated their grievances. The National Association, composed of stove manufacturers from every section of the country, was in session in the city of New York at the time this committee was taking testimony there. Quite a number of them were subpœnaed to appear, but none responded except Mr. Smizer. Several of the New York manufacturers were subpœnaed, but they all treated the command with contempt. It was said that the manufacturers of Troy were to come down in a body to present their grievances; if such existed, why have they not appeared? General John F. Rathbone of Albany

was also subpœnaed, and responded. A short conference with a member of this committee clearly showed that he would not be the kind of witness desired by the complainants.

Gen. Rathbone and Mr. S. H. Ransom, two of the oldest and most extensive stove manufacturers in this country, were present by my invitation last year at the time that I presented some considerations on this subject to the Senate committee, and they each, unsolicited, declared to the committee, that the prison contract gave them no trouble and that they favored it.

On the 25th of January last at a trades' meeting held in the Old Capitol, Mr. George Blair made the following statement: "Mr. Jewett, a large manufacturer of Buffalo, who employs several hundred men in that city told me that it was impossible for him to compete successfully with Messrs. Perry & Co. He says they can sell goods and realize a profit of 25 per cent when he is losing 10 per cent."

Mr. Jewett is a friend of mine of forty years' standing, and is a man of sense and discretion. I feel sure that he never made so loose a statement. A letter from him gives a different aspect to the matter.

I have very much desired and have urged that Mr. Jewett should be called to testify before this committee. Why has he not appeared? The absence of all these manufacturers may be fairly taken as a denial of the charge that they are injured by the prison contract of Perry & Co.

In regard to the question of health, there is no class of

mechanics who are more healthy or longer lived than temperate men employed in foundries. I have shown that the convict moulders employed by Perry & Co. are in a better physical condition upon their discharge than when they entered the prison. I have also shown that large tanks of running water are provided in the foundries; that the men are in the habit, more or less, of bathing their entire bodies, and that nothing prevents their doing so daily.

It has been said that some of the shops are dusty; they are such as citizens are glad to work in outside of prisons, and it does not appear that convicts are entitled to any special consideration in this regard.

The complaints that are made against convict labor generally emanate from trades unions. These despotic bodies are not satisfied with controlling the shops of employers and their citizen employés, but they are striving also to control the employment of convicts and their work. They aim at *supreme control* and will stop at no device to obtain it.

Let me quote some of the rules which they now impose upon free labor, falsely so-called.

Article 8 of by-laws of the Moulders' Union reads as follows:

"*Any journeyman moulder commencing work in any foundry under the jurisdiction of this association previous to 7 o'clock*, A. M., *shall be fined* $2 *for the first offense, and not less than* $5 *for each offense thereafter.*"

I ask this committee to seriously consider the scope of this grinding rule to be applied to men in this free coun-

try, and to so-called free labor. These moulders work by the piece, and before the introduction of this rule, it was their choice during the warm season to get their work up during the cool hours of the morning. They were thus enabled to accomplish more work and therefore earn larger wages.

Article 34, Iron Moulders' Union of North America, recites :

"*No member working by the piece can employ a helper and pay him out of his wages.*"

Article 35 : "*No member working by the piece can work a helper if the helper is paid by the employer.*"

Article 38 : "*A member cannot take his own son on the floor with him for the purpose of learning the trade.*"

Such are some of the arbitrary rules of a body of men who come whining to the Legislature about the oppression of free labor by the convict system. The excluding of boys from learning a trade leads to idleness and crime. We see it illustrated in the hordes of loungers to be found on every street corner, and this explains the melancholy fact that more than one-half of the convicts in our prisons are under thirty years of age.

The census of 1880 shows that the proportion of mechanics, male and female, old and young, to the whole population of our country is five and one-half per cent. Therefore if the prisons are to be made non-productive, ninety-four and one-half per cent of our population are to be taxed for their support to relieve the pretended burdens of the few, and they are only pretended, not real.

It is also shown that the proportion of mechanics among immigrants is thirteen per cent. During the six years of the existence of the present contract system under the new Constitution, over two and one-half millions of immigrants have been added to our population, and of this number it is estimated that about 340,000 were mechanics. But, admitting that but half that number were skilled mechanics, how contemptible in comparison is the small number of 24,000 male and female convicts, old and young, employed in all our prisons, jails, penitentiaries and houses of refuge on mechanical work, their products representing the labor of less than 12,000 citizens.

It is the view of some theorists, that the alleged injury to citizen labor by labor in prisons would be avoided by introducing a diversity of industries in our penal institutions. This would at once drive from them every business of any magnitude, for in this day few kinds of manufacturing can be conducted with success except on a large scale.

The business in the prisons would then be confined to small, weak industries, that might be more unable to bear the competition than the great interests of the country, which are carried on by individuals and corporations upon a large scale, and with unlimited capital and credit.

Col. Wright says (1880, page 14): "If prison contracts have any effect upon free labor, they bear the most heavily upon small industries, like the gilt moulding trade, which has provoked so much discussion in this Commonwealth."

The Legislature of New Jersey passed a law two years since, limiting the number of convicts to be employed in any one industry, to one hundred. The result has been a loss to the State of $30,000, and the necessity of resorting to deceit by dividing the manufacture of certain articles under different heads. In this way the stove contract could be divided into fifteen or twenty different branches. Such a course would be neither honest nor dignified.

The inter-state commission, referred to, was composed of seventeen prominent gentlemen of the highest respectability, representing manufactures, trades unions, and the professions. Persons of almost every class appeared before them and stated their views, their theories and their grievances, real or imagimary. The sittings of the commission were continued from time to time during several months, and every one who desired had an opportunity of being heard.

The Massachusetts Commissioners report (page 13):

"A large amount of testimony was secured, all of which came on special invitation save that of five persons who could alone be found interested enough to appear after a public hearing was advertised three days in three newspapers of the largest circulation in the State.

"The testimony of manufacturers and contractors, workmen and philosophers, stripped of its verbiage and reduced to the level of plain fact, coupled with a thorough weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of prison contracts, has brought your committee to the opinion that the effect of prison contracts upon the combined interests of the State is not appreciable."

The Connecticut Commissioners report (pages 40 and 41):

"Every avenue at home and abroad has been carefully searched; months have been devoted to the inquiry; reports of similar investigations in the United States, Canada and Europe have been read and considered; the written opinions of men who have made the science of penology a careful study have been obtained; all who have complaints to make have been heard, and as a result the Commissioners have failed to discover any ground for the complaints made against the Connecticut State Prison or the contract system."

The Commissioners then sum up the whole matter in the following words:

1. "That there is a great difficulty in finding responsible parties to take prison labor."

2. "That the price paid for it is not greatly below its value."

3. "That as a rule convicts do not accomplish more than half as much as free men."

4. "That the profits of the contractors, as a rule, are not larger than that of ordinary manufacturers, and that as many of the former fail as the latter."

5. "That prison-made goods do not, as a rule, undersell free manufactures."

6. "That it would not be just to the State or the prisoner to abolish machinery from the prisons, or to prohibit the convicts from being employed at skilled industry."

7. "That the public account system is not practicable under ordinary circumstances, because wardens are very

seldom good managers of convicts, and also good managers of manufacturing industries."

8. "That workmen as individuals are not unreasonable; they admit that convicts should work; they are willing the trades should be taught them; they disclaim any aversion to working in the shop or at the bench with an ex-convict. Or that such associations would be a disgrace; they ask that greater effort should be made toward reform."

9. "That it is only when met in convention that imaginary evils are magnified into real wrongs; it is only in convention that they demand the enactment of such laws as would prevent reform, would increase crime by enforcing degrading labor or idleness, would abolish machinery and prohibit skilled labor."

Here we have the deliberate conclusion of a body of intelligent and fair-minded men, who had no personal interest to serve, and who gave several months of labor to the investigation of this great subject. What higher authority can the public demand?

In regard to the wisdom and importance of treating convicts with kindness and consideration for their unfortunate condition, I feel sure the committee will bear me out in saying, that Perry & Co. need no defense. The testimony in their favor is explicit.

It was to be regretted that a more promiscuous selection of convicts to appear before the committee should not have been made. It was very evident that the selection was made by those who had other ends to serve than prison reform, and that the witnesses for the com-

plainants were mainly from the worst classes in the prison.

There is another point that I desire to bring prominently to the attention of the committee, and it is the liberty to pay convicts for extra work.

The tasks imposed upon those employed under the contract with Perry & Co. are light, and in most cases can easily be performed, in one-half to two-thirds of the time allotted to labor. Under the present law the pittance paid to discharged prisoners is almost a premium for them to re-enter the paths of crime. It would appear that those without friends able and willing to render them assistance, must be left to steal or starve. Could such men on their discharge have in their pockets $50 or $100 or more honorably earned, would not their chance for reformation be vastly increased?

It is the opinion of those whose experience entitles them to be heard, that the introduction of such a system would become a powerful aid both to reform and to discipline; I earnestly bespeak of this committee its favorable consideration.

JOHN S. PERRY.

ALBANY, *March 6th*, 1883.